

Nath. W. West
NATURAL RELIGION,

AS DISTINGUISH'D FROM

REVEALED:

A

SERMON

PREACHED AT THE ANNUAL

DUDLEIAN-LECTURE,

AT

HARVARD-COLLEGE in CAMBRIDGE,

May 9. 1759.

By EBENEZER GAY, A. M.

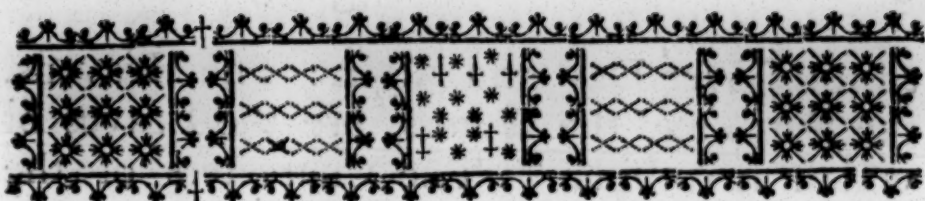
Pastor of the First Church of CHRIST in *Hingham.*

Lex Communis in publicis Mundi, et naturalibus Tabulis scripta.
TERTULLIAN.

BOSTON; NEW-ENGLAND:

Printed and Sold by JOHN DRAPER. 1759.



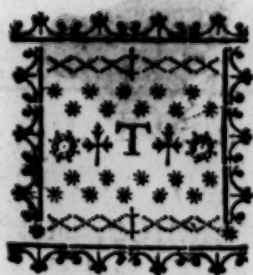


Natural Religion,

as distinguished from *Revealed*.

R O M. ii. 14, 15.

For when the Gentiles, which have not the Law, do by Nature the Things contained in the Law; these having not the Law, are a Law unto themselves: Which shew the Work of the Law written in their Hearts, their Conscience also bearing witness, and their Thoughts the mean while accusing, or else excusing one another.



THE Belief of GOD's Existence is most essentially fundamental to all Religion, and having been at the first of the *Dudleian Lectures* established; the moral Obligation which it induceth upon the Nature of Man, may be the Subject of our present Inquiry.

A DEVOUT *Hermit* being asked, How he could profit in Knowledge, living in a Desert, without Men and Books? answered, 'I have one Book which I am always studying, and turning

turning over Day and Night : The Heavens, the Earth and the Waters, are the Leaves of which it consists. ' The Characters of the Deity are plainly legible in the whole Creation around us : And if we open the Volume of our own Nature, and look within, we find there a Law written ; — a Rule of virtuous Practice prescribed.

RELIGION and Law (divine) are Words of promiscuous Use ; denoting in the general Signification thereof, *An Obligation lying upon Men to do those Things which the Perfections of God, relative unto them, do require of them.* In this Definition (whether exact and full, or not,) I mean to imply all Things incumbent on such reasonable Creatures as Men are, toward all Beings with which they are concerned, GOD, the supreme, one another, and themselves ; and which are incumbent on them, by vertue of the Perfections of God, in the Relation there is betwixt Him and them : other Obligation which can be supposed to any of the same Things, not being of the religious Kind. And in the doing those Things to which Religion is the Obligation, are included, besides the actual Performance, the Principles, Motives and Ends thereof ; all that is necessary to render any Acts of Men, whether internal or external, such as the Perfections of the Deity require.

RELIGION is divided into natural and revealed : — *Revealed Religion*, is that which God hath made known to Men by the immediate

In-

Inspiration of his Spirit, the Declarations of his Mouth, and Instructions of his Prophets : *Natural*, that which bare Reason discovers and dictates : As 'tis delineated by the masterly Hand of St. *Paul*, the Apostle of the Gentiles, in the Words of holy Scripture now read—Which I take as a proper and advantageous Introduction to my intended Discourse on this Head, *Viz.*

THAT Religion is, in some measure, discoverable by the Light, and practicable to the Strength, of Nature ; and is so far fitly called Natural by Divines and learned Men. The Religion which is possible to be discover'd by the Light, and practis'd by the Power of Nature, consists in rend'ring all those inward and outward Acts of Respect, Worship and Obedience unto God, which are suitable to the Excellence of his all-perfect Nature, and our Relation to Him, who is our Creator, Preserver, Benefactor, Lord, and Judge ;— And in yielding to our Fellow-Men that Regard, Help and Comfort, which their partaking of the same Nature, and living in Society with us, give them a Claim to ;—And in managing our Souls and Bodies, in their respective Actions and Enjoyments, in a way agreeable to our Make, and conducive to our Ease and Happiness : And doing all from a Sense of the Deity, imposing the Obligation, and approving the Discharge of it. For 'tis a Regard to Him in every moral Duty that consecrates it, and makes it truly an Act of Religion. These Things, indeed

deed, are contained in the Revelation of God, which affords the chief Assistance to our knowing and doing of them ; and yet they belong to the Religion of Nature, so far as Nature supplies any Light and Strength to the Discovery and Practice of them.

I. THAT Religion is in some measure, discoverable by the Light of Nature. The Obligation lying on us to do those Things which the Perfections of God, as related to us, require, is discernable in the Light of natural Reason. This Faculty of the human Soul, exercised in the Contemplation of the universal Frame of Nature, or of any Parts thereof; and in the Observation of the general Course of Providence, or of particular Events therein, may convince Men of the Existence and Attributes of God, the alwise, powerful and good Maker, Upholder, and Governor of all Things. It may be questioned whether the reasoning Faculty, as it is in the Bulk of Mankind, be so acute and strong, as from the necessary eternal Existence of the Deity (which is as evident and incontestible, as that any Thing is) to prove all other Perfections do belong to God in an infinite Degree. If it be not easy to their Apprehension, that the Idea of necessary Self-existence includes every Perfection, and every Degree thereof, which can possibly be, or which implies not a Contradiction ; yet it is plain to the lowest Capacity of those who, with a little Attention, survey the Works
of

of God, that He is a Being of such Perfection : And that, since He is their Maker, Owner, and Benefactor, to whom they are indebted for all that they are, and have, and on whom they depend for all they need, or can enjoy ; they are bound to yield unto Him, in the Temper of their Minds, and Manner of their Behaviour, toward Him, and his Creatures they are concerned with, all that Regard which Religion founded in the Nature of God, and in the Nature of Man, and the Relation there is between them implies. They may perceive their Obligation to reverence, adore, and worship a Being of such Perfection and Glory, as God is—to invoke the Almighty—pray unto Him, who is able to perform all Things for them ; to give Thanks to Him, from whom they receive all Blessings ; to aim and endeavour to please their Lord and Master, to whom they are accountable for their Actions, and who is just to punish their Offences, and bountiful to reward their Services.—They may discern the Wisdom and Goodness of their Maker, in designing and fitting them for a social Life in this World, and thence the sacred Engagements they are under to mutual Benevolence, commutative Justice, and all such Demeanour in their various Stations and Relations, as tends to promote the common Welfare, and the Good of Individuals.—Their Souls may know right well, how wonderfully God hath made them with Powers and Faculties superior to any bodily Endowments ;

B

which

which should not therefore be subjected to the Sway of brutish Appetites and blind Passions. Reason may know it's divine Right to govern, to maintain it's Empire in the Soul, regulating the Passions and Affections ; directing them to proper Objects, and stinting them to just Measures. Nature affords considerable Light for the Discovery, and Arguments for the Proof, of such Parts of Religion. There is an essential Difference between Good and Evil, Right and Wrong, in many Cases that relate to moral Conduct toward our Maker, Mankind, and ourselves, which the Understanding (if made use of) cannot but discern. The obvious Distinction is founded in the Natures and Relations of Things : And the Obligation thence arising to chuse the Good, and do that which is Right, is not (as I conceive) antecedent to any Law or Institution, enjoining this upon us. It primarily originates from the Will and Appointment of the Author of those Natures, and Founder of those Relations, which are the Grounds and Reasons of it. And his Will is signified by his apparently wise and good Constitution of Things, in their respective Natures and Relations. The Law of Nature is given by the God of Nature, who is Lord of all. He enacted it by creating and establishing a World of Beings in such Order, as he hath done. He publishes it to rational Creatures (as is necessary to it's binding them) in making them capable to learn from his Works, what is good, and what is required

red of them. Natural Conscience is his Voice, telling them their Duty. This (in part) is the *work of the Law in their Hearts.*—'Tis the Engravement of it there, answerable to the Writing of it on Tables, in order to it's being made known: And so Men are *a Law unto themselves*, are supply'd with a Rule of Actions within their own Breasts. The Righteousness which is of Nature (to adopt the Language of Inspiration) speaketh on some such wise, as doth that which is of Faith: *Say not in thine Heart who shall ascend into Heaven; or who shall descend into the Deep*, to bring us the Knowledge of our Duty? *The Word is nigh thee, even in thy Heart*, shewing thee what thou oughtest to do: *Conscience also bearing witness*, testifying for or against Men, according as they obey or disobey the Word of Reason, which is the Word of God: And so *their Thoughts*—the general Notions of Good and Evil in them, make them either to accuse themselves as Transgressors of a known Law, or else excuse them, as not having culpably done any Thing against it. In the due Exercise of their natural Faculties, Men are capable of attaining some Knowledge of God's Will, and their Duty, manifested in his Works, as if it were written in legible Characters on the Tables of their Hearts. And 'tis on this Account, that any Part of Religion is called Natural; and stands distinguished, in *Theology*, from that which is revealed.

II. THAT Religion is, in some Measure, practicable to the Strength of Nature. There is doing, as well as knowing, by Nature, the Things contained in the Law of it. Knowing them is but in order to the doing them : And the Capacity to know them would be in vain, (which nothing in Nature is) if there was no Ability to do them. Whoever observes the divine Workmanship in human Nature, and takes a Survey of the Powers and Faculties with which it is endowed, must needs see that it was designed and framed for the Practice of Virtue : That Man is not merely so much lumpish Matter, or a *mechanical* Engine, that moves only by the Direction of an impelling Force ; but that he hath a Principle of Action within himself, and is an Agent in the strict and proper Sense of the Word. The special Endowment of his Nature, which constitutes him such, is the Power of Self-determination, or Freedom of Choice ; his being possessed of which is as self-evident, as the Explanation of the Manner of it's operating, is difficult : He feels himself free to act one Way, or another : And as he is capable of distinguishing between different Actions, of the moral Kind ; so is he likewise of chusing which he will do, and which leave undone. Further to qualify our Nature for virtuous or religious Practice (which necessarily must be of Choice) the Author of it hath annexed a secret Joy or Complacency of Mind to such Practice, and as sensible a Pain or Displeasure to the contrary.

trary. And this inward Judgment which every one passes on his own Actions, is enforced with another Principle, which belongs more or less to our common Nature, viz. a Regard to the Judgment that is passed upon our Conduct by other Beings ; especially Beings whose Favour or Displeasure is of any Importance to us : There is a secret Satisfaction of Soul, which ariseth from their Approbation ; and as exquisite a Sense of Pain and Uneasiness from their Censure.—The Spirit of Man being thus formed within him, it is (according to the original Design and wise Contrivance of our Maker) naturally disposed toward Religion : It hath an Inclination there-to implanted in it, which under the Direction of right Reason, is an inward Spring of Motion and Action, when Reason alone would not give sufficient Quickness and Vigour in pursuing it's Dictates.

THERE may be something in the intelligent moral World analogous to Attraction in the material System—something that inclines and draws Men toward God, the Centre of their Perfection, and consummate Object of their Happiness ; and which, if it's Energy were not obstructed, would as certainly procure such Regularity in the States and Actions of all intelligent Beings in the spiritual World, as that of Attraction doth in the Positions and Motions of all the Bodies in the material World. — “ Created intelligent Beings (says Dr. *Cheyne*) are Images of the SUPREME INFINITE

NITE, as he calleth God. In Him there is an infinite Desire and Ardor of possessing and enjoying Himself, and his own infinite Perfections, in order to render Him happy : He himself is the sole Object of his own, and of the Felicity of all his Creatures. There must therefore be an Image of this his infinite Desire after Happiness in all his intelligent Creatures—a Desire after Happiness in a Re-union with Him. An intelligent Being, coming out of the Hands of infinite Perfection, with an Aversion, or even Indifferency, to be reunited with it's Author, the Source of it's utmost Felicity, is such a Shock, and Deformity in the beautiful Analogy of Things, such a Breach and Gap in the harmonious Uniformity, observable in all the Works of the Almighty, and that in the noblest and highest Part of his Works, as is not consistent with finite Wisdom and Perfection, much less with the supremely infinite Wisdom of the ALL-PERFECT. — This Principle was most certainly implanted in the Creation of intelligent Beings, in the very Fund and Substance of their Natures, thô there remains but few Footsteps and Instances of it's Being or Effects.— It wonderfully analogises with that of Attraction in the material World : As to the SUPREME INFINITE, it may very properly be called, his *Attraction* of them ; and as to them, their *Central Tendency*, or Gravitation (so to speak) toward Him. ” This Tendency in human Nature, which that penetrating Enquirer

quirer into both the constituent Parts of it, accurately observes, is an Inclination to Religion—to many Offices and Acts of it, by which Men return and re-unite to the Author of their Beings; who hath so made all Nations of them, that they should seek the Lord, if haply they might *feel after him, and find him*. There is in the common Nature, which all partake of, a Propension to Acts, not only of human Kindness, but also of divine Worship; which excites to the Performance of them, when proper Occasions of doing them occur, without previous, express Deliberation and Determination concerning them: And to forbear them is a painful Restraint upon Nature; and to do the contrary, is thwarting it's Inclination, and wresting it from it's Bent.— There is observable in Man † a *natural Proclivity* (as *Origen* termeth it) towards his Maker; to acknowledge God; especially on Occasions of Need or Distress to have recourse unto Him. And from hence ariseth so universal a Consent of Mankind in paying some Homage to the Deity, which is not always directed to the true, because so many blindly follow natural Inclination, without consulting Reason, which should be it's Guide. There is such a Disposition in human Nature as makes Religion agreeable to it; so that Divines of great Name have affirm'd it to be essential thereto, and that which raises it above the Brutal; and Philosophers, from what is innate to Man, have defined

† φιλτρον φυσικὸν τὸ πρὸς τ' κτίσασιν.

defined him a *Creature capable of Religion*.—Whoever attends to this inward Furniture of our Nature for Religion, may easily perceive it to be God's Workmanship, primarily created unto good Works, that Men might walk in them. His Formation of them qualifies them, in a measure, for religious Practice ; as his Regeneration, or Renovation of them doth more so. And his fitting them by Nature therefor, is a Work of his, to which the Work of Sanctification, in his furnishing them with Grace to evangelical Obedience, beareth Analogy. The former is the Work of the Law written in their Hearts, that they may do, as well as know, what it enjoins : The latter is the Impression of the Gospel upon them, that, thro' Christ's strengthening them, they may do what it requires. And by doing the Things contained in the Law of Nature, Men *shew the Work of the Law written in their Hearts, and are a Law unto themselves*, as truly and plainly, as regenerate Christians, by doing the Things contained in the Gospel, are *manifestly declared to be the Epistle of Christ, written, not with Ink, but with the Spirit of the living God, not in Tables of Stone, but in fleshly Tables of the Heart*. The Scriptures thus describing the Religion of Nature and of Christ, clearly distinguish between them ; as the former may be practised by the Strength of Nature, and the latter by the Strength of Christ, — his Spirit helping the Infirmities of our Nature.

How

How far the Duties of Religion are possible to be performed by the Strength of Nature, in a lapsed State; and to what Measure of divine Approbation and Acceptance, Reason, unenlightened by Revelation, may not be able to determine.—The Law of Nature is purely a Law of Works, and requires perfect Obedience, which the Transgressors of it, as all Men are, cannot yield to it: And whether that which is wanting in their Obedience, may be supplied by Repentance and Humility in them, and by Mercy and Pardon in God, cannot be certainly known without a Revelation of his Will, on which it wholly depends. The Goodness of God, in the general Course of his Providence, toward sinful Mankind, sheweth Him to be placable, and leadeth them to Repentance; but doth not assure them of Pardon upon it, much less of the Reward of eternal Life, for imperfect, tho' it should be sincere, Obedience. If Reason doth not see and pronounce it inconsistent with the Perfections of God to pardon Sinners, on the sole Condition of their Repentance; yet it cannot infer from them, that he will:—All that it can say, is in the Words of a Heathen King, *Who can tell if the Lord will turn from his Anger, that we perish not?* Such Inducement they may have to repent, and turn from their evil Ways:—And it may farther encourage them to better Obedience, by suggesting the Consideration which may be had by a merciful God of the Frailty of their

C

Nature,

Nature, and the gracious Allowances He may possibly make them, whose Strength, so weakened as it is, cannot reach the Height of their Duty. In the Prescription of Duty, 'tis not unreasonable, that what may be required, even in Rigour, should be precisely determined, tho' in Execution of Justice, or Dispensation of Recompence, Consideration may be had of our Weakness; whereby both the Authority of our Governor may be preserved, and his Clemency glorified. Men's Thoughts or Consciences accusing them for the Violation of the Law of Nature, implies a Fear which is not groundless, that they shall be brought into Judgment: And their Thoughts excusing and approving of them for doing, in some Measure, what the Law requires, implies a Hope, which may not be altogether vain, that they shall be accepted. Tho' it should be, as one saith, "That all the moral Virtues are so many Cyphers—unavailing Nothings, unless the Deity be placed as the principal Figure at the Head of them;" yet if practised out of any Sense of Duty to God, and with a View to pleasing Him, as it is possible they may be, and have been, shall we say, they are merely splendid Vices in his Eyes; and that the most humble Prayers of natural Men are Blasphemies in his Ears? May there not be such a conscientious doing by *Nature the Things contained in the Law* of it, as, thro' the Riches of divine Bounty and Goodness, shall in some low Measure, compar'd with doing the same by Grace, be acceptable

ceptable and rewardable? May not a *God of Knowledge*, by whom *Actions* are weighed, discern some Good in those done by the Strength of Nature, and approve the honest, tho' weak, Efforts thereof, to serve him; and thereupon, besides outward Favours (of which He is liberal to all both good and bad Men) grant the Succours of his Grace, enabling them to do the same, and other Things to better Acceptance, and to the obtaining a greater Reward, even that which the Christian Revelation proposes; and is thereby differenced and distinguished from natural Religion?

AND, now, if what hath been so imperfectly spoken, be according to the Truth in Nature, and not inconsistent with the Christian Verity, the proper Use and Improvement of it is, *To form a just Estimate of Natural Religion*; and guard against the dangerous Extremes in our Regards to it—Not to have a debasing, nor a too exalted Notion of it.

I. WE should not depreciate and cry down Natural Religion, on Pretence of advancing the Honour of Revealed—as if they were two opposite Religions, and could no more stand together in the same Temple than Dagon and the Ark of God. Whatever Distinction we observe between them, there is no Contrariety in the one to the other: They subsist harmoniously together, and mutually strengthen and confirm each other. Revealed Religion is an

Additional to Natural ; built, not on the Ruins, but on the strong and everlasting Foundations of it. Nothing therefore can be vainer and more preposterous, than the Attempt to raise the Credit of the one, upon the Discredit of the other ; as if to allow any Virtue, or any Praise, in natural Religion, would be derogatory to the Honour of revealed : And to represent the former as insignificant to the grand Purpose of Religion, and chief End of Man ; the glorifying and enjoying God :—As availing nothing towards Man's Recovery from a sinful State, and his Attainment unto Holiness and Happiness :—As if his knowing and doing *by Nature the Things contained in the Law* of it, could be no more acceptable to his Maker, nor profitable to himself, than his Ignorance and Neglect of them : And whatever Improvement and Progress he made in natural Religion, he was not a Step nearer the Kingdom of God ; nor a fairer Candidate for Heaven than a *Heathen-Man, or a Publican*. The Law of Nature, like that of *Moses*, may be serviceable unto Men, *as a School-Master to bring them to Christ*, for higher Instruction ; especially where the Means of such are afforded ; and so usher them into a State of Grace. Notwithstanding the Insufficiency of natural Religion to their Salvation, yet it may, in some Measure, prepare them to be Partakers of the Benefit, without any Diminution of the Glory of the Gospel, which is the Grant of it, or Detraction from the Merits of our blessed Redeemer

deemer, who is the Author of it. It is only by Grace that sinful Men can be saved ; yet, by making some good Use of their rational Powers (weakened as they be) in the Study and Practice of natural Religion, they may be in a better Preparation of Mind to comply with the Offers and Operations of divine Grace, than if they wholly give up themselves to the Conduct of sensual Appetites & Passions. Whether those Offers & Operations of divine Grace are designed for, and ever vouchsafed to such as are not favoured with Revelation; and it be possible for them to obtain Mercy, in the Day when God by Jesus Christ shall judge the Things which they have done, *according to the Gospel* ; is a Point which Revelation only can determine ; and is not my Province to discuss.

IN the Preference we give to revealed Religion, we should not for the sake of any particular Truth we apprehend to be deliver'd in it, hastily renounce a Principle of natural Religion, seeming contrary thereto. Both should be carefully examined, before either be rejected : Else we may err, after the manner which the *Sadduces* did, *Not knowing the Scriptures, nor the Power of God*. It must be owing to our Ignorance, or Misapprehension of Things hard to be understood in the Book of Nature, and the holy Bible, that we cannot reconcile them. No Doctrine, or Scheme of Religion, should be advanced, or received as scriptural and divine, which is plainly and absolutely

folutely inconsistent with the Perfections of God, and the Possibility of Things. Absurdities and Contradictions (from which few human Schemes are entirely free) are not to be obtruded upon our Faith. No Pretence of Revelation can be sufficient for the Admission of them. The manifest Absurdity of any Doctrine, is a stronger Argument that it is not of God, than any other Evidence can be that it is. “ A Revelation must be agreeable to the Nature of God, and Possibility of Things.” We are not rashly to determine concerning one that it is not so, because we don't easily and clearly see it to be so: Nor plead that any may be so, which contradicts all our natural Ideas of the Attributes of God. To say, in Defence of any religious Tenets, reduced to Absurdity, that the Perfections of God, his Holiness, Justice, Goodness, are quite different Things in Him, from what, in an infinitely lower Degree, they are in Men, is to overthrow all Religion both natural and revealed; and make our Faith, as well as Reason vain.— For, if we have no right Notions of the Deity, (as 'tis certain, upon this Supposition, we have none,) as we worship, so we believe, we know not what, or why. We don't know what Respects are due from us to the Perfections of God; or that any are required of us by Him. For, as well as any other moral Perfections, Truth may be quite different in God, from what it is in Men; and so there may be nothing of that which we conceive of as
such,

such, in his Assertions and Promises.—He may declare one Thing, and mean another ; promise one Thing, and do another :— God may be True and Faithful, and yet deceive us ; as well as Holy and Just, and do that which is not Right. Revelation gives us the same (tho' clearer) Ideas of the Attributes of God, which we have from Nature and Reason : And if it taught any Thing contrary thereto, it would unsay what it saith, and destroy it's own Credibility. To set the Gifts of God at variance, is to frustrate the good Design and deprive ourselves of the Benefit of them. Vehemently to decry Reason, as useless, or as a blind Guide, leading Men into Error and Hell ; and to run down natural Religion as mere *Paganism*, derogates from the Credit of revealed, subverts our Faith in it, and dissolves our Obligation to practice it.

2. WE should not magnify and extol natural Religion, to the Disparagement of Revealed. We cannot say, that the Light and Strength of Nature, how great soever, in it's original State of Rectitude, had no Assistance from Revelation, toward the first Man's actual Knowledge and Performance of his Duty to his Maker. At the first opening of his Eyes and Understanding, he might not by one intuitive View, have a clear and full Discernment of the Perfections of God stamped on his Works, and the moral Obligations engraved in his Heart.— God made Himself and his

his Will known to *Adam* in some other Way beside that of his Creation. There was some *other* Voice of the Lord, beside that of universal Nature's declaring his Being and Pleasure to him ; and by which more might be spoken for his Instruction, than we have an Account of in the Mosaick History. And perhaps such Manifestation as God more immediately made of Himself to Man, put his Reason in Exercise for all the Discoveries it was capable of making afterwards from the Works of Creation. Had Man, with all his natural Endowments in their perfect Order and Strength, been placed in this World, and no Notice given him of it's Maker, might he not have stood wondring some Time at the amazing Fabrick, before he would have thence, by Deductions of Reason, argued an invisible Being, of eternal Power, Wisdom and Goodness, to be the Author of it and him ; to whom he was therefore obliged to pay all Regards fuitable to such glorious Excellencies ? Would he so soon and easily have made those Discoveries, which are necessary to the Perfection of natural Religion, understood and practic'd by him in Paradise, till he eat of *the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil* ? If his being Created after the Image of God imports more, than his Formation with a sufficient Capacity in his Nature for, and entire Disposition to, even the actual Possession and Use of all that Knowledge, Righteousness and true Holiness, of which the Religion of Nature, consists ;

consists ; yet his falling into Sin, and effacing the divine Image in his Soul, greatly alter'd the Case, with respect to him, and his Posterity, and made Revelation a necessary Supplement of supernatural Light and Strength, for the Discovery and Performance of acceptable and available Religion. And such a Revelation, in it's first Degree and early Dawn of it, was graciously vouchsafed to Man, upon his Fall into a State of Darkness and Weakness, Sin and Misery. — Which Revelation continued, and gradually encreased, to the Church of God in all past Ages of it from the Beginning, hath done more to preserve and propagate that little even of natural Religion, which there hath been among Mankind, than all the boasted Improvements of Nature's dimmed Light, and enfeebled Powers have done. The first Parents of Mankind, no doubt, instructed their Children in the Principles and Duties of Religion, not only those which concern'd them as sinful Creatures, and are founded in the new and encouraging Relations God stands in to us, which the Gospel, published in Paradise, reveals, but also in those which are comprehended in the Law of their Creation : Otherwise they might not soon enough, if ever, have arriv'd to a competent Knowledge of them. It might have been long, e're Reason, uncultivated by Education, would by searching, have found out God — so much as that He is. Perhaps of it's own natural Motion, now become so dull and stupid, it

D would

would not have enquired after Him, or have proceeded far in the Discovery of Him. To a traditionary Revelation, how imperfect and obscure soever, amongst most Nations that have dwelt on the Face of the Earth, might be owing the Knowledge they had of God, and divine Things:— At least the Hint thus given them of such Things, might awake their rational Powers to any Exercise about them, which otherwise might have lain dormant in their benighted Minds.

REASON, as well as Revelation, teacheth us, that human Nature, in it's original Constitution, and as it came out of the Hands of a good Creator, must be Perfect in it's Kind, and that it since, by our Abuse of it, is wofully impaired. It might not approach quite so near the Angelical, yea, Divine Nature in it's integral State, as some imagine; nor might it by the Sin of the *Protoplast* fall quite so low, as others affirm; and become a strange heterogeneous Compound of two other Natures, retaining nothing of Humanity in it. The superior Excellency and Strength of innocent *Adam's* Soul, might not be so much above the common Standard, since, as the *Talmudists* describe his bodily Stature—so Tall, that, standing on the Earth, he could touch the Heavens with his Hand; yet it doubtless had every way the Advantage for the free and sublime Exercises of a rational Soul. Some appear to have an extravagantly high Opinion, and others a too debasing Notion of human Nature,
even

even in it's lapsed Estate : There are still in it, as received by Derivation from apostate Parents, " some *legible Characters, Out-lines, and Lineaments* of it's Beauty; some *magnificent Ruins*, which shew what it had been, enough to demonstrate the original Impression of the divine Image and Law." It is, however disorder'd and debilitated, a rational Nature, capable of religious Knowledge and Practice. But can we guess, how much thereof it would attain to, in the short Time of this Life, if it were left altogether uncultivated in Individuals ; and Mankind had run wild, like the Beasts of the Field ? How much more would the Generality of 'em know, than what they know as *natural brute Beasts* ? and in those Things have corrupted themselves : The higher Powers of their Nature not exerting themselves for the first Years of their Lives, and so the more subjected to the Sway of the inferior, might be of little Use toward the Discovery and Performance of the Things of Religion : Any innate Inclination to them might be smothered in the Crowd of worldly Lusts ; the Attention of the Mind diverted from them, and all the Essays to do them, be hindered by the Amusements of sensual Pleasure, the Encroachments of secular Business, the Prevalence of bad Customs and Examples. The Capacities with which they are made, the Principles with which they are endowed, in order to their knowing of, and acting agreeable to, moral Obligations, might be suppressed,

sed, and kept down by violent Appetites and Passions, and lie buried under earthly Affections. Men might have been absolutely without God in the World;—without any Sense of the Deity upon their Minds; without all Thought of any other Things than such as were just before them. Their Knowledge and Care might not have extended beyond the Sphere of Sense: Their Prudence might have appear'd only in Matters of a civil Life, and a temporary Concern; and possibly there wou'd have been no Religion in the World, but that which consisted merely in, as Atheists say, all was introduced by, *State-Policy*.

Thus much, I think, may be probably inferred from the History of all Ages of the World, in which the Nations which have not enjoyed the Revelation which God from Time to Time granted to his Church, have had so little of Natural Religion among them, mixed and spoiled with the grossest Errors, Superstitions, and Abominations. The Glimmerings of Nature's Light, and small Remains of it's Strength, not being duly improved, were, in a manner, lost from among them, and they *sat in Darkness, and the Region of the Shadow of Death*: Tho' what might be known of God, was manifest to them in his Works; and they had moreover some obscure Traditions, which gave Rise to their heathenish Worship, and according to which they ordered the Rites of it. While we are amaz'd at the Stupidity which they labour'd under

under in their reasonable Faculties, it sheweth us what is to be expected from savage, undisciplined Nature. We do not argue therefrom the Incapacity of human Reason, under all the Disadvantages of our lapsed State, to know and do better ; but the Inefficacy of it, in fact, to the Purposes of Religion, when unassisted by Revelation.—And were it not for this, we may guess what a deplorable State of Ignorance and Wickedness, increasing from one Age to another, all Mankind would have been in at this Day. What hath polished Nature and refined Reason to boast of, in Matters of Religion, among the wisest and most learned of the Heathens? Did they *by Wisdom know God, and glorify Him as God.* Did *Athens*, that Eye of the World, see the *invisible Things of Him*, made visible enough in his Works to the Eye of human Understanding, *even his eternal Power and God-head?* The Altar erected there to the UNKNOWN GOD, was a Monument of their Ignorance of the true. If they worshipped Him at all, they *did it ignorantly, and were in all Things too superstitious.* Was the State of natural Religion better at *Rome*, when Learning flourished there, than that of the Christian is, now Popery prevails? They, *who professed themselves wise, became Fools* ; as great, as if they had said, *There is no God*, in changing the *Glory of the incorruptible God, into an Image made like corruptible Man, and to Birds, and four-footed Beasts, and creeping Things ;*
and,

and, *serving the Creature, more than the Creator*; and approving and doing those Things that are contrary, not only to the Religion, but even the Inclination of Nature. — Under much Doubt and Uncertainty have the ablest Writers of them left the first Principles of Natural Religion. It is enough (saith one) to raise the Pity of a Christian, when he reads *Cicero's Discourse of the Nature of the Gods*, to find the Disputants fighting in the dark, puzzling themselves, and one another, confounding Truth and Error; and at last drawing off almost on equal Terms without Victory's declaring on either Side.—Not to mention the Deficiencies and Errors in any Scheme of Natural Religion, which the learned Heathen ever presented the World with; I may say, that the Christian Revelation contains one far more entire and satisfying. The Principles and Duties of it are therein stated, explained, and enforced, in a Way far above whatever they were before. And 'tis not without Reason supposed, that they would not have been propounded so clearly and fully as they be, in the most celebrated Writings of Morality among the Heathen, had there been none of divine Inspiration among the People of God.

THE Gospel of Christ hath to be sure been a *Light to lighten the modern deistical Gentiles*: For the juster Notions they have of the divine Attributes, and moral Duties than the ancient, they are greatly indebted to that Revelation

velation which they decry. Not to say any Thing of those heavenly Truths and important Duties, which are taught only in the Bible ; 'tis there we learn the Religion of Nature in it's greatest Purity ; which, if there were nothing more to be said in it's Commendation might be enough to raise our Esteem of it. And the Grace of God appears in assisting Reason by Revelation in those Discoveries, which it possibly could, but never did, nor would make, without such Help. — And the same is true, with respect to the Performances of Duty : *In thy Light we see Light.* It is in the Light of Revelation, added to that of Nature, that Things are so plain and easy to our discerning, as that we are ready to think bare Reason must discover them to all Mankind, and that we, un-enlightned by the Gospel, should have known as much of the Principles and Duties of Natural Religion. But, if we are thence insensible of, and unthankful for, *the tender Mercy of our God,* whereby *the Day-spring from on High hath visited us,* we are stupidly inconsiderate ; and need not (as we are apt) to smile at the odd Philosophy of the simple *Rustick*, who thought the World had little Benefit by the Light of the Sun, “ Because it shin'd in the Day-time.” By Means of Revelation we have the right Use of Reason, in Matters of Religion : And, by the due Exercise of Reason, so excited and directed, we have the inestimable Benefit of Revelation. Both are *good Gifts*, — Rays from
the

the Father of Lights, to enlighten every Man that cometh into the World. — The Mind hath great Satisfaction in observing the harmonious Agreement between them, and the Objects of religious Knowledge and Faith appear the more beautiful and amiable in this double Light: And the better we understand and practise the Religion of Nature, the wiser and better Christians shall we be.

IN a just Sense of this, and with a pious View to the Establishment of Religion, natural and revealed, and the Propagation of it in this Land, free from impure Mixtures of Heathenish and Popish Errors and Superstitions, by the Ministry of able, authorized Preachers, was the Anniversary-Lecture, here founded by the Honourable Judge DUDLEY, whose Memory must be ever precious in this Society, as his Praise will be in our Churches, as well as Courts.

AND this Discourse may lead the Students of the College, such especially as are design'd for the Work of the Ministry, to reflect on the great Advantage of a liberal Education, to open and enlarge their Minds for the Knowledge, and dispose their Hearts to the Love and Practice, and fit them to be Preachers of Religion. — Academical Studies, particularly in natural Philosophy and mathematical Sciences, tend to impregnate your Souls with grand Ideas of the Attributes of God, displayed in his Works, *which are great, sought out of all them that have Pleasure therein*; and help you
more

more clearly to discern the Foundations of natural Religion. Some other Branches of Literature may seem more dry and barren, yet are useful to furnish you with the Tongue of the Learned ; and prepare you to the Search of the Scriptures in their inspired Originals ; so that at those Fountains of sacred Truth, your Souls, thirsty of it, may possibly drink it in purer, than it is convey'd to us in the best Translations. All the Skill you here acquire in Arts and Sciences, may be serviceable to you in the Profession of *Theology* : And the better Scholars you go from this Place, the abler Divines will you prove, and the more Good may you do in the World. Having such a Price in your Hands to get Wisdom, may every One of you have a Head and Heart to it !—How reproachful will it be to you, and not a little dishonourable to this School of the Prophets, if, when for the Time and happy Advantages enjoyed in it, ye ought to be Teachers, you should then have need that one teach you the Rudiments of natural Religion, and the first Principles of the Oracles of God ?

It concerns us all to make Proficiency in Religion, answerable to our Capacities therefor, and the Means and Helps afforded us thereto—That having the Foundations of it well laid in our Minds, by convincing Reasons, and authentic Testimonies of Scripture, we go on to Perfection : Which that we may do ;—Let us, as the Discourse now had, ad-

D

monishes

monishes us, have a due Respect both to natural and revealed Religion : And not suffer our Zeal to swell so high, and move in so strong a Current towards the one, as shall prove a Drain from, and lower the Regard, which we owe to the other—Let us faithfully improve all the Light and Strength which natural Reason and divine Revelation supply, toward our knowing and doing *whatsoever Things are true—honest—just—pure—lovely—and of good Report—in which there is any Virtue, and any Praise* ; and so make continual Advance in Religion, 'till we come unto a *perfect Man*, in the redintegrated State of Nature—*unto the Measure of the Stature of the Fulness of CHRIST.*

A M E N.



THE

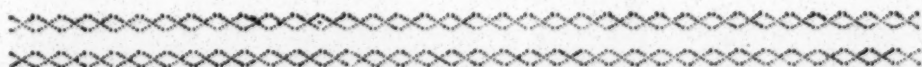


THE
CHARACTER

OF THE LATE HONORABLE

Judge *DUDLEY*,

As it was inserted in the *Boston-News-Letter*,
February 7th, 1751.



ROXBURY, February 2. 1750, 1.

Yesterday, with great Decency and Respect,
were interr'd here the Remains of the Ho-
nourable PAUL DUDLEY, Esq; Chief-Justice
of the Superior Court of Judicature, &c. within this
Province: A Gentleman not more distinguished by his
high Station, than by his eminent Virtues and great
Abilities, so long and happily employ'd for the Good
of the Public.

He was born at *Roxbury* in the Year 1675, was the
Grandson of THOMAS DUDLEY, Esq; one of the first
Governors of the *Massachusetts* Colony, and the eldest
surviving Son of the late Governor DUDLEY, to whose

2 *The Character of Judge DUDLEY.*

Estate, as he was principal Heir, so he inherited a large Share of those superior Talents that enrich'd the Mind of that great and accomplish'd Gentleman.

At the Age of eleven Years he was found qualified for an Admission into *Harvard-College*, where he proceeded Batchelor of Arts in the Year 1690, and Master of Arts in the Year 1693. Soon after which he went over to *England*, and was enter'd a Student in the Inner-Temple. After he had finished his Studies there, and had been called to the Bar, he return'd to his native Country, to the Service of which he had early devoted himself.

As his natural Endowments were uncommon, so he had abundantly furnished his Mind by great Reading and close Study. His Knowledge (far from being confin'd to the Law) was great in most Parts of Literature: He was well versed in Natural Philosophy; an honourable Proof of which was his being a Member of the ROYAL SOCIETY: He had thoroughly studied Divinity: And in History, both civil and sacred, he had scarce an equal. These were some of the Accomplishments which so well qualified him for public Service, which was the constant Business of his Life.

Upon his Return to *New-England* he was appointed Attorney-General for the Province, and for several Years he served the Public in that Capacity. He was some time a Representative for his native Town in the General Court; and sat for many Years at the Council-Board: In all which important Offices he acquitted himself with great Fidelity and Honour. But it was in the Seat of Justice he was most generally known, and therefore most admir'd. To that he was advanced in the Year 1718, being then appointed one of the Justices of the Superior Court, of which, upon the
Death

The Character of Judge DUDLEY. '3

Death of the Honourable Judge LYNDE, he was commissioned the Chief-Justice : And in this high and important Station he served the Province till his Death. Here it was that he display'd so eminently his admirable Talents, especially his quick Apprehension, his uncommon Strength of Memory, and extensive Knowledge ; and at the same time his great Abhorrence of Vice, together with that impartial Justice which neither respected the Rich, nor countenanced the Poor Man in his Cause. Thus while with pure Hands and an upright Heart he administered Justice in his Circuit through the Province, he gain'd the general Esteem and Veneration of the People. As his Presence always commanded Respect, so it might justly be said of him that he scatter'd Iniquity with his Eyes, which struck with Awe the most daring Offenders. When he spake, it was with such Authority and peculiar Energy of Expression, as never fail'd to command Attention, and deeply impress the Minds of all who heard him ; and his Sentiments of Law and Evidence in all Causes before the Court, had generally a determining Weight with those who were charged with the Trial of them.

The Powers of his Mind retain'd their Vigour to a remarkable Degree in his advanced Age ; though he labour'd under great Indispositions of Body : These were often heavy upon him while attending the Business of the Court, which perhaps occasioned his discovering some Impatience, when Arguments at the Bar were drawn out to a great Length, and his expressing himself with some Appearance of Severity : But if hereby he gave any Disgust in public, he made full Amends for it in private ; where all who enjoy'd his Company were charm'd with his entertaining and polite Conversation : For, with all his other Accomplishments, he had naturally a most happy Turn for Conversation ; in which he always shew'd the Gentleman, the Scholar, and the Christian.

As

4 *The Character of Judge DUDLEY.*

As he early made a Profession of the Christian Religion, so he was ever careful to adorn it by a suitable Conduct in the several Relations of Life. He always express'd a tender Concern for the Interests of his Country, both civil and religious, and greatly lamented any ill-boding Aspects upon either. He was a Friend and Patron to Men of Learning and Religion, especially to the Clergy, to whom he always shew'd a particular Respect. The Interests of our College he tenderly regarded while he lived; and at his Death he enrich'd it by a generous Donation.

All who had the Honour of an Acquaintance with him and his Family, knew him to be one of the most tender Husbands, a kind and indulgent Master, a good Neighbour, and an affectionate Friend. As in his own House his Behaviour was truly exemplary; so he was an eminent Pattern of just Deportment in the House of God: His unaffected Gravity and devout Attention, while engag'd in Divine Service there, shew'd him to be what he was at Heart, a Man of real Religion. This Religion was his Support and Comfort in the Hour of Death. He had the Exercise of his Reason during the whole of his Sickness; and all along discover'd that Humility, Patience, Charity and Confidence in his God and SAVIOUR, which one would wish to see in a dying Friend.

His vertuous Consort, (to whom he owed no small Part of the Happiness of his Life,) was one of the Daughters of Colonel JOHN WAINWRIGHT of *Ipswich*. By her he had several Children, who all died in their Infancy. This Lady still lives to deplore her great Loss, and mingle her Tears with those of the Public.

6 AP 64



